

Daniel P. Vrakas
County Executive



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Meghan Sprager – Executive Assistant, (262) 548-7902

Celebrating Hunger Relief

WAUKESHA – The Waukesha County Nutrition Coalition will hold a community celebration for its members and the public at the Child & Family Center of Excellence on Tuesday, March 20 from 9 – 11 a.m.

The free event will showcase the coalition's 12-year history in working to prevent hunger and food insecurity issues, providing information and education on nutrition issues, and promoting social policies that achieve food security while honoring the dignity of the people that its member agencies serve.

Department of Senior Services Director and Nutrition Coalition Chairperson Cathy Bellovary said, "This event is a perfect way for the coalition to highlight a unique partnership within the community that has effectively combated hunger issues through collaborative programs and services focused on people in need. I truly hope that member agencies and concerned residents make time to stop in at this celebration."

Although poverty is a subjective term, the federal poverty line is intended to indicate the minimum resources that families need for an adequate standard of living. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 9,635 people in Waukesha County were living below the federal poverty level of \$17,050 annually for a family of four people and an additional 28,443 people in the area were considered to be near poor or between 100 – 185% of the federal poverty level.

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“Celebrating Hunger Relief” *continued...*

In order to help these individuals and families fit hunger and become self-sufficient, the Nutrition Coalition has formed a number of programs that have achieved impressive results. One such effort is the Food Recovery Program. Since 2002, this program has collected food products totaling \$1,609,000 in value from more than 100 local businesses and has distributed it to 55 non-profit agencies throughout the county that help link people to food resources.

The Garden Gleaning program is another function of the coalition that seeks to collect fresh produce from local farmers’ markets, a Waukesha County Huber Facility garden program, local gardeners and youth garden programs. From 2000 – 2006, this program has documented the collection on 150,983 pounds of fresh produce, which was donated to area meal programs and food pantries within the communities where the produce was grown.

Poverty simulations have also been conducted to help people understand what it might be like to be a low-income family and to sensitize them to the reality that these families face on a daily basis. To date, 416 community leaders, coalition member agency staff, educators, law enforcement personnel, elected officials and other participants from Waukesha County have engaged in poverty simulation workshops.

In addition, the Nutrition Coalition was instrumental in starting the Backpack Program to provide children entering foster care with a bag full of personal items, snacks, games and toys, and the \$14/Day Challenge to raise awareness about the difficulties that low income families face when trying to feed their family for a day. The group also organized the first school breakfast program in Waukesha County and has assisted with numerous food drive efforts.

Current coalition members include: The Caring Place, Community Action Coalition, Cooperating Congregations of Waukesha County, Elmbrook Church, Energy Services, Inc., Food Pantry of Waukesha County, Headstart, Interfaith Caregiving Network, La Casa de Esperanza, Mukwonago Food Pantry, New Berlin Food Pantry, The Salvation Army, SHARE, Sussex Area Outreach Services, United Way in Waukesha County, The Volunteer Center, Waukesha County Executive’s Office, Waukesha County Department of Senior Services, Waukesha County Mental Health Association, Waukesha County Public Health Division/WIC, Waukesha County UW-Extension, Waukesha Memorial Hospital, The Women’s Center, Hebron House of Hospitality and Hunger Task Force.

The Child & Family Center of Excellence is located at N4 W22000 Bluemound Road, Waukesha. For more information about the event or the coalition, please contact Program Coordinator Melinda Stuart at (262) 970-4713 or via e-mail at mstuart@waukesha-county.gov.

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